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CURRENT LITERATURE

BOOK REVIEWS

Textile fibers

A book by STIRM[1] on the chemical technology of textile fibers deals with every phase of the derivation and handling of the fibers: source, method of obtaining, physical and chemical character, washing and bleaching of the raw fiber, preparation for stamping and dyeing, and stamping and dyeing themselves. The work covers plant fibers (cotton and various bast fibers, such as flax, hemp, jute, and manila), animal fibers (wool, hair, and silk), mineral fibers (asbestos), and artificially produced fibers from mineral raw materials (glass and mineral fiber) and from plant raw materials (India rubber fiber and artificial silk). The work on plant fibers reminds the botanist of the detail with which these technical workers have studied the histology, chemistry, and physics of cotton, bast, etc. In the case of cotton, one finds a good summary of our knowledge of the histology and microchemistry of the fiber. The chemical composition of the fiber is given, including the substances involved as impurities, with methods of removal. The chemistry of cellulose is dealt with briefly, with various theories as to its molecular weight and structural formula. The behavior of cellulose toward many reagents in various concentrations (acids, bases, salts, oxidizing and hydrolizing agents, and various solvents) is clearly summarized. The changes involved in such processes as bleaching, mercerization, and formation of artificial silk are discussed, along with the theories offered in explanation. The author recognizes many of the problems with cellulose as belonging to the field of colloidal chemistry. The histology and chemistry of bast fibers receive like consideration. The work reminds one that the knowledge useful to the technical worker is often the same as that which is of significance to the "pure" scientist.—WILLIAM CROCKER.

MINOR NOTICES

The Journal of Ecology.—It is rare that a new journal starts off so well as does the *Journal of Ecology*,[2] the first volume of which is now completed. In 1904 a great advance was made in ecological study in the British Isles by the organization of the Central Committee for the Survey and Study of British Vegetation, more popularly known as the British Vegetation Committee. This organization secured the effective cooperation of British ecologists, and among other things has to its credit the organization of the International Phytogeographic Excursion of 1911 and the publication of *Types of British vegetation.* In 1912 there was formally organized the British Ecological Society, which has become the successor of the British Vegetation Committee. One of the chief tasks of this new society is the publication of a journal. The first thought was to have this new journal be little more than an organ of the British ecologists. But a broader view prevailed, and we now have an international journal devoted to ecology, the first of its kind; from the first number the quality of the journal has been such as to give it rank with the foremost botanical periodicals.

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[1] STIRM, KARL, Chemische Technologie der Gespinnstfasern. xvi+410. Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger. 1913.

[2] The Journal of Ecology, edited for the British Ecological Society by FRANK CAVERS. Cambridge University Press (American agent: The University of Chicago Press). Volume I. 1913. Price per annum, $3.75.

The scope of the new ecological journal is such as to make an effective appeal to ecologists of other lands quite as much as to those of the British Isles. To facilitate use by both general and local readers, articles and reviews of general nature are kept distinct from those of more local significance. To the writer the "high-water mark" of the new journal seems to be reached by its reviews. It is doubtful if the reviews in any other botanical journal equal in efficiency those of the new *Journal of Ecology.* They are models as to thoroughness and accuracy, in many cases making it really unnecessary to consult the original papers except to secure details. It is unusual and highly illuminating to have published in many of the reviews the more significant illustrations of the original papers. The only adverse criticism that the writer would make is that the reviews generally are unsigned. It goes without saying that the new journal is absolutely necessary for the working ecologist. The British ecologists may well congratulate themselves upon their accomplishments during the last decade. In 1904 their work was scattered and mostly of local significance; today they are unquestionably the leaders in cooperative ecological activity.—H. C. COWLES.

American Journal of Botany.—The first number of this new journal has appeared, and needs no explanation to American botanists. It is the official publication of the Botanical Society of America, and is published by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The introductory statement by the editor-in-chief, Professor F. C. NEWCOMBE of the University of Michigan, shows that the increase of means of publication has not kept pace with production. "The result has been that our established botanical journals in America are overstocked with manuscripts waiting their turn, our colleges and universities are making outlets for their own production, and foreign journals have their courtesy and capacity taxed by the offers of American contributors. All three of the conditions just named are undesirable: an author does not like to wait a year or more for the publication of his paper, the multiplication of small periodicals by colleges and universities is a vexation to research, and it is neither